

## **Vaccination against COVID-19**

All vaccines against COVID-19 offered in Canada are both safe and efficacious. They are approved by a committee of experts made up of authoritative scientists and doctors. These vaccines are subject to the same standards of quality and safety as all other vaccines used in Canada.

Both Canada and Québec have very thorough vaccine-monitoring systems.

### **Why should I be vaccinated?**

All the vaccines against COVID-19 approved by Health Canada are proven to prevent the serious variants of the disease and the risks of complications. They also help to reduce hospitalizations, deaths, and the spread of the virus throughout the population. Our goal is to return to a normal –or almost normal– life. Furthermore, general vaccination will help to sustain the proper functioning of our healthcare system.

### **Who is at risk?**

The elderly have a much higher risk of developing complications and of dying from COVID-19. Persons with chronic illnesses, frequently in contact with infected persons or who have a deficient auto-immune system are also at risk, but age remains the main risk factor.

### **As it happens, I work in the hospital sector. Can I be vaccinated first, regardless of my age?**

Yes. If you treat patients directly, you have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Particular measures have been taken to make vaccination available to you at your place of work. Vaccination is highly recommended, as it can protect you from possible complications, while also protecting your patients as well as your family members.

### **Where can one get vaccinated?**

Persons in the top priority groups are now being urged to make an appointment online to be vaccinated at a vaccination centre near their homes, by visiting [Québec.ca/vaccinCOVID](https://quebec.ca/vaccinCOVID). Vaccination is free; and is carried out solely by the Québec Immunization Program. It's not possible to buy doses on the private market.

**I find it difficult to navigate the Internet; or there are no vaccination centres available in my region in the coming weeks.**

Dial [1 877 644-4545](tel:18776444545) and you will be helped. You can also dial your area code followed by 644-4545 to reach the help phone.

### **One dose or two?**

Studies have proven that even one dose can effectively reduce the more serious types of COVID-19, even in the elderly. A second dose is effective in achieving optimum protection. During your first appointment to get your first dose, another appointment will be made for a date 16 weeks later for the second dose. Once vaccinated, a proof of vaccination document will be given to you.

For persons who have already contracted COVID-19 before being vaccinated against this virus, only one dose of the vaccine is necessary. The infection itself triggers the auto-immune system's response as would a first dose of the vaccine. A dose of the vaccine given to a person who has already had COVID-19, has therefore a recall effect as would a 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in the case of a person who has never been infected. Please note that it is not dangerous to receive two doses of the vaccine, even if one has already had COVID-19.

### **Can I stop the physical distancing and the wearing of the mask after having been vaccinated?**

You should know that it takes at least 14 days for the COVID-19 vaccine to take effect. Many months will be needed before a significant segment of the population is fully protected by the vaccine. The two-meter physical distancing, the wearing of the mask or facial covering and the frequent washing of the hands are therefore habits worth preserving. When the majority of the population will have been vaccinated and the propagation of the virus will have been controlled, new measures will then be announced by the government.

### **Can I choose my vaccine?**

No. It's not possible to choose the vaccine which will be administered to you: it will be determined with respect to which doses are available. All available vaccines provide more than 80% protection against the most serious effects of COVID-19, thus preventing hospitalizations and deaths at the same time. When your turn comes, it is important for you to be vaccinated with the vaccine which is available at that vaccination centre. If you have any worries about the

vaccine which is being offered you, tell the healthcare professional in charge of your evaluation when you arrive at the vaccination centre. You can then make an informed decision.

**I don't have a Québec Health Insurance Card... [I'm not a permanent resident]...; can I be vaccinated?**

Yes, as vaccination is a public health measure intended to protect the whole of the population residing in Québec. The online form acknowledges that situation; and you can check the line or circle indicating that you don't have the Québec Health Insurance Card. You must inscribe your date of birth, your mother's first and last name and, if possible, your coordinates so we can contact you for your 2<sup>nd</sup> dose. **Your immigration status doesn't matter when it comes to your right to be vaccinated.** In case of difficulties, do not hesitate to call the COVID information line mentioned above.

**Remember: The vaccine does not protect you 100% against COVID-19, but it reduces the symptoms and avoids the medical complications linked to the virus. It's our responsibility to protect ourselves, as well to protect the members of our family, our community and our work milieu!**

